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S E C R E T AMMAN 002693

SIPDIS

NOFORN

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SUBJECT: JORDAN DECLINES TO DEMAND SEARCH OF IRANIAN PLANE;  
WILL LIKELY DENY CLEARANCE

REF: SECSTATE 101892

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (B), (C), (D)

1. (S) The Ambassador made ref points on Iranian aerial resupply of Hizballah May 27 to Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher. PolCouns and Muasher's personal aide Ali al-Ayed were also present. The Ambassador asked that Jordan grant overflight clearance for a possible May 28 Iranian resupply flight, then demand that the plane land for inspection once it enters Jordanian airspace.

2. (S/NF) Muasher responded that a decision to take such action was "more security than political" and requested that we also consult through ORCA channels. Noting that Saudi Arabia has much more airspace through which an Iranian plane would have to fly, he inquired whether the U.S. was making a parallel demarche in Saudi Arabia (the Ambassador confirmed that we were). Muasher promised to check and get us an answer as soon as possible.

3. (S) Less than an hour after the demarche, Ayed called PolCouns to say that the GOJ had decided that it could not/not grant clearance to an Iranian plane then demand that it submit for inspection. Instead, as had been Jordan's recent practice, Ayed said, if Iran makes an overflight request, Jordan will likely not grant clearance. He commented that only in one or two cases has Iran actually requested overflight of Jordan for a civilian cargo flight bound for Syria, despite the fact that the USG has made numerous demarches in recent months that such requests were forthcoming.

4. (S) COMMENT: The GOJ is clearly not ready to expose itself to Iran, Syria, and Hizballah by asking that an Iranian cargo flight land for inspection. While they have not told us so, the Jordanians may calculate that an Iranian pilot would simply ignore or delay answering an inspection request for the few minutes the airplane would be in Jordanian airspace. That would leave them politically exposed to no practical purpose. They will likely, however, continue denying overflight clearance to Iranian civilian cargo planes about which we give them advance notice.  
Gnehm